

CONFIDENTIAL PTO6567

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INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 VC-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9612
INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002576

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S KANSTEINER FROM CDA RICHARD ROTH

E.O. 12958: DECL. 08/30/11

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SUBJECT: BONGO CANCELS TRIP TO HARARE AT LAST MINUTE

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF MATT HARRINGTON. REASONS:
1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. (U) DRC PRESIDENT JOSEPH KABILA OFFICIALLY OPENED THE 2001 HARARE AGRICULTURAL SHOW ON AUGUST 29. ACCORDING TO A PRESS REPORT, GABONESE PRESIDENT OMAR BONGO WAS SCHEDULED TO OPEN THE EVENT BUT CALLED OFF HIS TRIP AT SHORT NOTICE. GEORGE CHARAMBA, A SPOKESMAN IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT BONGO CANCELLED HIS PARTICIPATION "AT THE LAST MINUTE...BECAUSE HE WAS COMMITTED ELSEWHERE."

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2. (C) HENRY MUKONOWESHURO, A DIPLOMAT IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S AMERICAS OFFICE, TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ON AUGUST 31 THAT BONGO HAD NEVER COMMITTED TO ATTENDING THE FAIR. IN A WRITTEN RESPONSE DECLINING THE GOZ INVITATION, BONGO REPORTEDLY CITED "PRIOR COMMITMENTS OF WHICH HE HAD BEEN UNAWARE."

3. (C) COMMENT: WE SUSPECT THAT BONGO, WHO IS REPORTEDLY SENSITIVE ABOUT HIS STATURE AS AN AFRICAN STATESMAN AND MEDIATOR, MAY WANT TO KEEP SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MUGABE, WHOSE IMAGE CONTINUES TO DECLINE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE. BONGO'S "PRIOR COMMITMENT" MAY WELL BE TO HIS OWN IMAGE. WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY LIBREVILLE'S THINKING ON THIS ISSUE.

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